

**GREAT  
LAKES  
THEATER**

TEACHER PREPARATION GUIDE

# PETER *and the* STARCATCHER



A Play by RICK ELICE

Based on the novel by DAVE BARRY and RIDLEY PEARSON

Music by WAYNE BARKER

Directed by JACLYN MILLER

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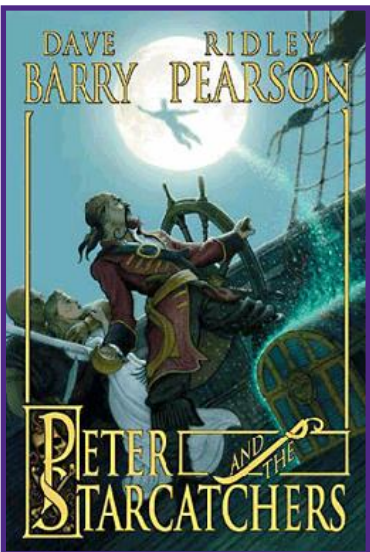
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Winter 2025

Dear Educator,

Thank you for your student matinee ticket order to Great Lakes Theater's production of Rick Elice's *Peter and the Starcatcher*. This production will be performed in the beautiful Hanna Theatre at Playhouse Square from February 7—March 2, 2025.

Set sail to explore the Neverland you never knew with this Tony Award-winning prequel that charts a course through Peter's untold adventures. A dozen actors portray over 100 unforgettable characters in this high-flying adventure bursting with imagination and ingenious stagecraft. It is a humorous, heartwarming ride through ambition, yearning and the magic of friendship, where you will discover the boy who never grew up before he took flight.

Great Lakes Theater is proud to provide you with the finest in classic theater and the necessary educational resources to support your work in the classroom. We are thrilled that you will be coming to see us and we welcome your input on how best to support your classroom preparation for our work. Please let us know what you think!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kelly Schaffer Florian".

Kelly Schaffer Florian  
Director of Educational Services  
[Kflorian@greatlakestheater.org](mailto:Kflorian@greatlakestheater.org)

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Hansen".

David Hansen  
Education Outreach Associate  
[dhansen@greatlakestheater.org](mailto:dhansen@greatlakestheater.org)



## A Note to Students: What to Expect at the Theater

You may or may not have attended a live theater performance before. To increase your enjoyment, it might be helpful to look at the unique qualities of this art form — because it is so different from movies or video.

The live theatrical performance not only involves the actors on the stage; it is meant to involve you, the audience, in ways that film and television cannot. In truth, although you are sitting in an auditorium and the actors are on stage, there is very little separating the audience from the performers. How you react to the play *deeply affects* the actors. Something as seemingly trivial as whispering or unwrapping a candy bar can distract them and disrupt the mood and tone of their performance. Due to the important relationship between actors and audience members, there are certain, perhaps obvious, provisions of live theater we wish to call to your attention.

In the Hanna Theatre, it is important to know that the taking of pictures, either with or without a flash, is strictly prohibited. Also, it is essential that all electronic equipment, including cell phones, music players (even with headphones), alarm watches, etc., be completely powered off once you have entered the theatre. Even the glow from a watch or a silent cell phone (used for checking the time, text messaging, or posting social network updates, for example) can be very distracting to fellow audience members, even if you try to mask it under your hand or an article of clothing. Our goal is to provide every person in the audience with the best possible theatrical experience, so we appreciate your respectful cooperation during the performance.

Other differences live theater provides: in film or video, the camera and editing define what we will see. In the theater, however, each of us works as our own camera and editor, choosing our own personal points of focus. And in the Hanna Theatre, you should know that often we do not use microphones. As audience members you'll need to actively listen and "tune in" to the sound of the unamplified human voice.

As for our lighting and scenery, it might surprise you to know that these are not necessarily meant to be realistic. In this production, for example, there may be design elements that are abstract or metaphorical.

The theater's ability to focus on human experience — distilled through the dialogue and behavior of people on stage and enhanced by the scenery, costumes, lighting, music and dance — is a centuries-old tradition. Being part of the communal magic when performer and audience connect — whether at a baseball game, music concert or theater performance — cannot be duplicated.

The performance you will see at Great Lakes Theater will happen only once. It is unique and personal. Though this play will be performed more than a dozen times, the performance you see belongs only to you.

We hope you enjoy it, and we'd like you to share your response with us.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE *Jaclyn Miller*



“One man in his time plays many parts” and tonight, 12 actors will PLAY THEM ALL, even the inanimate ones. *Peter and the Starcatcher* epitomizes hyper-theatricality, tasking its small ensemble to don endless costumes and enact every facet of the play, from creating the scenery to being a dancing mermaid or even portraying an infamous crocodile. Yes, it’s *croc*-full of humorous puns, piracy, and serenading, BUT, at its heart, *Peter and the Starcatcher* is a glorious story about friendship and bravery. It is a love letter to coming of age and authentically owning who you are.

Encountering *Starcatcher* evokes sweet memories from my youth. Specifically, it brings up one person I hold dearly: my childhood best friend. He was the person I would protect at any cost - even when it meant getting in trouble or letting my parents down. He regularly had outrageous ideas that, even through fear or hesitation, he was always courageous enough to try. Most importantly, he gave me a sense of belonging. Through age and distance, we grew apart and are seldom in touch anymore, but two facts will never change: *that* was the defining friendship of my life and, I will always love him. We all can identify with these ideas of first love and invaluable friendship, and these themes are beautifully brought to light in *Peter and the Starcatcher* between Boy (Peter) and Molly.

*Peter* reminds us that life and nature are dependent on balance —with love comes loss. Every joyful childhood memory this play summons is underscored by the bittersweet reality of growing up. Reminders of hard lessons: sometimes what we think is right isn’t always best. For some, “family” is the one we create, not the one we’re born into. If we’re lucky, we meet people we have an unspeakable bond with; we awkwardly but unabashedly navigate adolescence and adulthood to authentically inhabit who we are. We discover what truly matters to each of us, but, in the end, we must say goodbye.

### Cast of Characters

Boy (Peter)/Ensemble .....	Benjamin Michael Hall*
Molly/Ensemble .....	Ángela Utrera*
Black Stache/Ensemble .....	Joe Wegner*
Gremplin/Mack/Sanchez/Fighting Prawn/Ensemble .....	Jeremy Gallardo*
Mrs. Bumbrake/Teacher/Ensemble.....	Grayson Hayl*
Slank/Hawking Clam/Ensemble.....	Jessie Cope Miller*
Smee/Greggors/Ensemble .....	Theo Allyn*
Prentiss/Ensemble .....	Evan Stevens*
Alf/Ensemble.....	Dar’Jon Bentley
Lord Aster/Ensemble .....	James Alexander Rankin*
Ted/Ensemble.....	Nic Scott Hermick*
Captain Scott/Ensemble .....	M.A. Taylor*

\*Members of Actors’ Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States

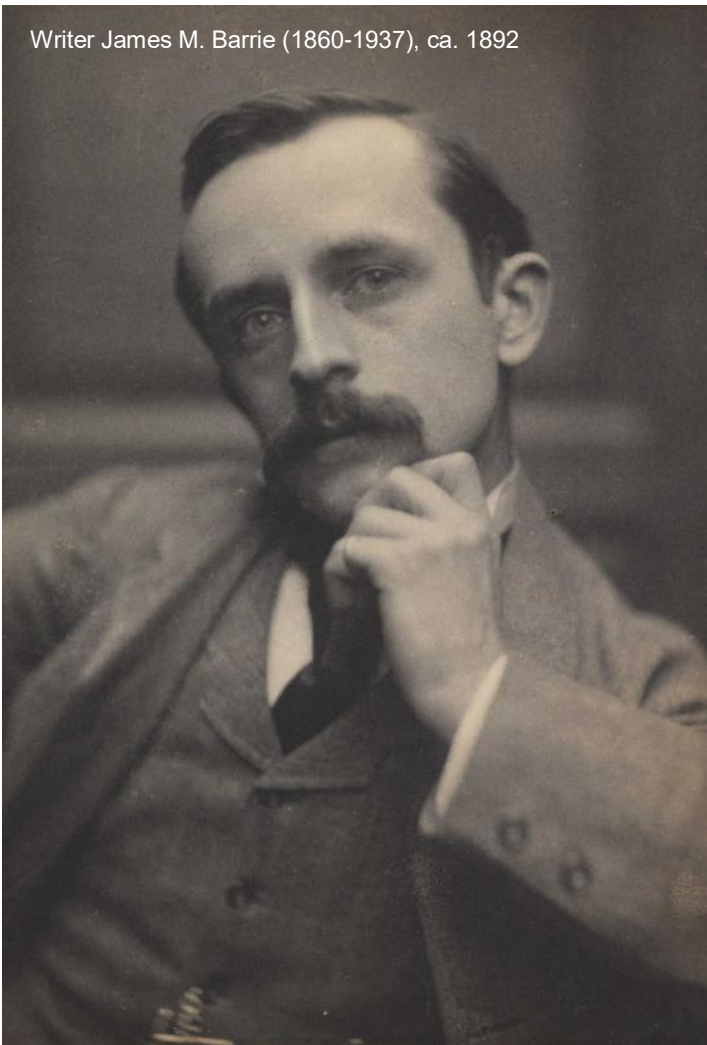
For now, *swashbuckle* up for this adventurous prequel, where you’ll discover how an orphaned Boy becomes the remarkable Peter Pan; you’ll be *hooked* as you witness one of the greatest rivalries of all time unfurl before your very eyes. **Spoiler Alert:** you’ll meet Wendy’s highly exceptional ancestor(s) —Molly— and be charged with acknowledging colonialism as well as the pain and destruction we sometimes inflict on people we consider to be “other.” AND, you’ll be reminded of what it’s like to be a kid again— with all the wonder, curiosity, and bravery we could only experience in our youth.

## PLAYNOTES: *The Evolution of the Peter Pan Story*

### EVERYTHING ENDS. AND SO OUR STORY BEGINS.

In the prologue to *Peter and the Starcatcher*, endings and beginnings circle around each other against the horizon of a place outside of time called Neverland. While the play, *Peter and the Starcatcher*, has its own origin story, the beginning of “our” story stretches further back in time.

Writer James M. Barrie (1860-1937), ca. 1892



#### **J. M. Barrie (1860-1937)**

Writer J. M. Barrie created the character of Peter Pan. Barrie was the ninth of ten children born to a prosperous weaver in Scotland. The original

inspiration for a boy frozen in time may have come from the death of Barrie’s older brother in a skating accident at age 14. The writer would later recall the impact his brother’s death had on their mother. He remembered once hearing her call out, “Is that you?” “I thought it was the dead boy she was speaking to,” he explained, “and I said in a little lonely voice, ‘No, it’s no’ him, it’s just me.’”

Barrie’s storytelling sessions with the Llewelyn Davies brothers grew to be quite elaborate, including costumes and assigned roles. Michael Llewelyn Davies was photographed in the role of Peter Pan.



J. M. Barrie made up a backstory for Peter Pan in the 1902 novel *The White Bird*. The relevant chapters were re-released in a standalone volume, *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, in 1906. One of Arthur Rackham's illustrations for the book shows baby Peter flying over the city of London.



The grieving mother and lonely son spent countless hours spinning stories with each other to fill the void.

Climbing from the University of Edinburgh to newspaper journalism to the theater, Barrie found success as a writer in London. In 1897, the 37-year-old author began crossing paths in Kensington Gardens with three young children and their nanny. As the three brothers expanded to five, Barrie became a regular in the Llewelyn Davies household. After the untimely deaths of both Llewelyn Davies parents, “Uncle Jim” became a guardian to the brothers. Summoning his inner “lonely voice,” as he had with his mother, Barrie conjured stories with the Llewelyn Davies brothers, stories that involved a crew of “gay and innocent and heartless” lost boys.

Barrie first introduced the character of Peter Pan to the public in 1902 in a novel titled *The Little White Bird*. He then amplified Pan’s exploits in a wildly successful 1904 stage play titled *Peter Pan, or The Boy Who Wouldn’t Grow Up*. A 1911 novel, *Peter and Wendy*—with its memorable opening line: “All children, except one, grow up”—repackaged the tale for readers. While Barrie wrote numerous other stories, articles, novels, and plays—most notably

*The Admirable Crichton*, a satirical comedy about the British aristocracy—he would forever and chiefly be associated with the story of Peter Pan.

*Peter Pan*—and pantomime entertainments based on it—became a staple of the Christmas season in London. A children’s hospital in the city still benefits from the royalties, as Barrie stipulated in his will. His original creation spawned prequels and sequels, live action and animated films, additional stage adaptations, and ice and circus-themed shows.

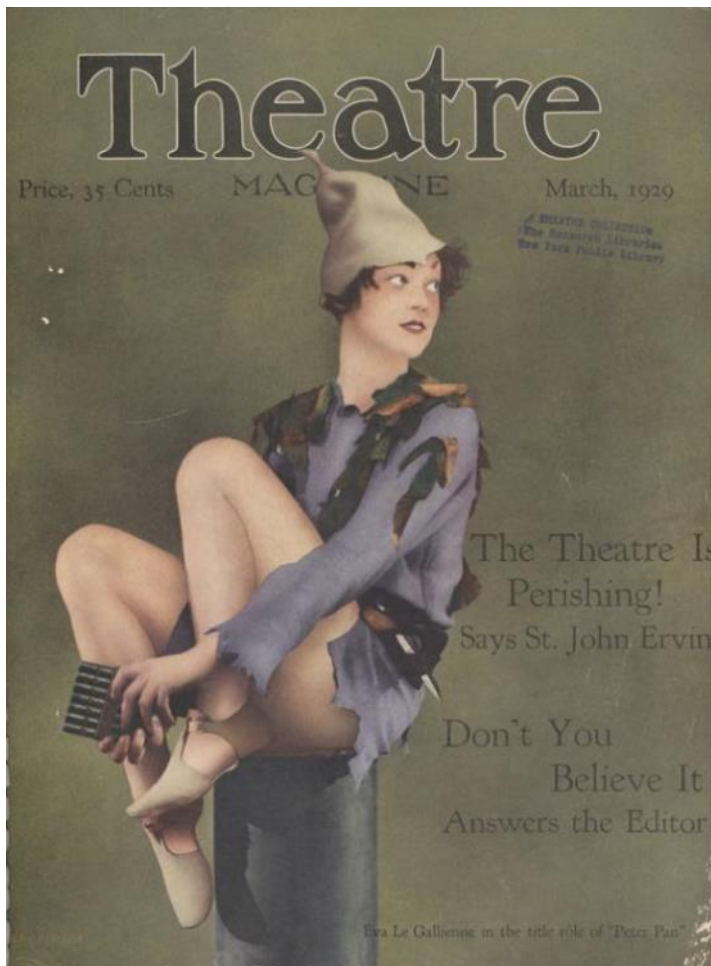
### **1954 Musical Theater, *Peter Pan***

As potent as Barrie’s work was, Peter Pan captured the American imagination in the guise of a 1954 musical theater adaptation. Mary Martin starred as an impudent Peter Pan, with Cyril Ritchard as the dastardly Captain Hook. Helmed by hitmaker Jerome Robbins, the Broadway production hit the mark, especially after noted songsmiths—composer Jule Styne and writers Betty Comden and Adolph Green—were hired to bulk up the score begun by Mark Charlap and Carolyn Leigh.

However, the relatively new medium of television multiplied the production's reach exponentially. Pioneering television director Fred Coe adapted the Broadway show for a Producer's Showcase series on NBC. A record sixty-five million people saw the live television broadcast on March 7, 1955. Live performances of the show were televised two more times, in 1956 and in 1960. By 1960 the technology for preserving live performances had become available, and the 1960 production was rebroadcast in full color in 1963, 1966, 1973 and 1989.

The musical theater version preserved Barrie's basic plot and characters—Peter Pan, Tinkerbell, the Darling family, Captain Hook and the pirates, the crocodile, Tiger Lily and her tribe. The Broadway production also drew on many of the staging traditions associated with Barrie's play.

Eva Le Gallienne's 1928 portrayal of Peter Pan was widely admired.



Nina Boucicault, a member of a prominent British theatrical family, originated the role of Peter Pan on stage.

Peter Pan had been played by an adult woman since the first stage production in 1904. At that time, children weren't allowed to perform on stage past 9 pm, and the curtain went up at 8 pm. Nina Boucicault, daughter of actor-manager and playwright Dion Boucicault, originated the role of Peter Pan. Her brother, Dion Boucicault Jr., directed the first production of Barrie's play and was the first to represent the fairy Tinker Bell as a darting light with a "voice" of tinkling bells.

Mary Martin's trademark short, leafy tunic was modeled after the one worn by British-born actress Eva Le Gallienne, who played Peter Pan at New York's Civic Repertory Theatre in 1928. Le Gallienne reveled in the extensive stage flying that was also a prominent feature in Martin's buoyant performance.

### ***Peter and the Starcatcher***

Walt Disney created another landmark in the journey from J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* to *Peter and the Starcatcher*. Disney encountered Barrie's play as a child, once recalling, "We were living on a farm, and one morning as we walked to school, we found



entrancing new posters. A road company was coming to the nearby town of Marceline and the play they were presenting was *Peter Pan* with Maude Adams.... I took many memories away from the theater with me, but the most thrilling of all was the vision of Peter flying through the air.”

Disney’s animation feature of *Peter Pan* bore a family resemblance to Barrie’s play and to the Mary Martin musical. Released in 1953, the animation preceded the Broadway show by a year, but their impact was largely contemporaneous and mutually reinforcing. Like Mary Martin’s televised performance, the animated feature was re-released numerous times, in 1958, 1969, 1976, 1982 and 1989. Both became ubiquitous and iconic in American pop culture.

By the early 2000s, however, the Walt Disney Company came to embrace a new direction for Barrie’s story. The traditional depiction of Tiger Lily

and her Native American tribe was grounded in what were now deemed to be racist tropes; Wendy’s stereotypical role as “mother” to the lost boys had also begun to feel confining.

In 2004 Hyperion Books, a Disney subsidiary, untethered the Peter Pan story from strict adherence to the Barrie framework and commissioned writers Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson to map out an entirely new set of “prequel” adventures for Peter Pan. The 2004 novel, *Peter and the Starcatchers*, was the first of what grew into a series of five.

The popularity of the Young Adult series prompted Thomas Schumacher of the Disney Theatrical Group to approach Roger Rees. “It was the summer of 2007, and Roger was running Williamstown Theater Festival at the time,” script writer Rick Elice would later recall. “Tom called him and said, ‘You’ve got this great theater and I’ve got this great property.

Mary Martin in the role of Peter Pan, as she appeared in both the 1954 Broadway production and multiple subsequent television broadcasts.





In the spare and inventive staging developed by Roger Rees and Alex Timbers for the original production of *Peter and the Starcatcher*, actors deployed a length of rope to create a boat cabin, and model ships to convey a sea voyage.

Maybe you can take this book and do a Nicholas Nickleby kind of play with it.” Rees had originated the role of Nicholas Nickleby in the legendary Royal Shakespeare Company production of the play of the same name. At the time Rees also happened to be working with Alex Timbers on a new musical, *Bloody Andrew Jackson*.

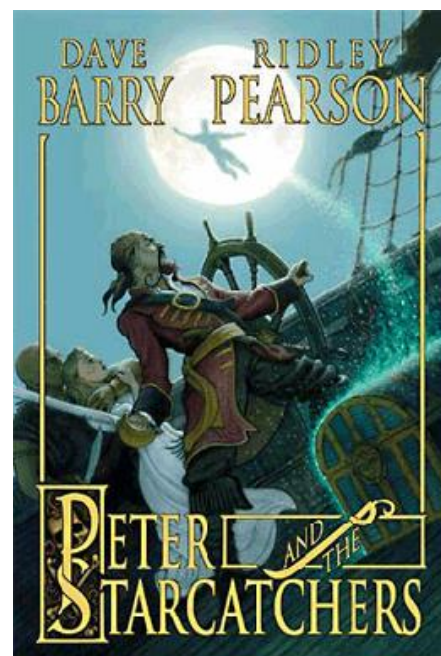
During off hours, Rees and Timbers gathered some interns and such simple props as sticks, rope, and a bucket, and developed a “story theater” approach to a few segments of the book, in the narrative, ensemble style of *Nicholas Nickleby*. After enlisting *Jersey Boys* book writer Rick Elice and recruiting musical theater alumni of such shows as *Legally Blonde*, *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, and *Spamalot*, Rees and Timbers led workshop

productions at La Jolla Playhouse’s Page to Stage series in 2009 and at New York Theatre Workshop in 2011, finally landing on Broadway in 2012.

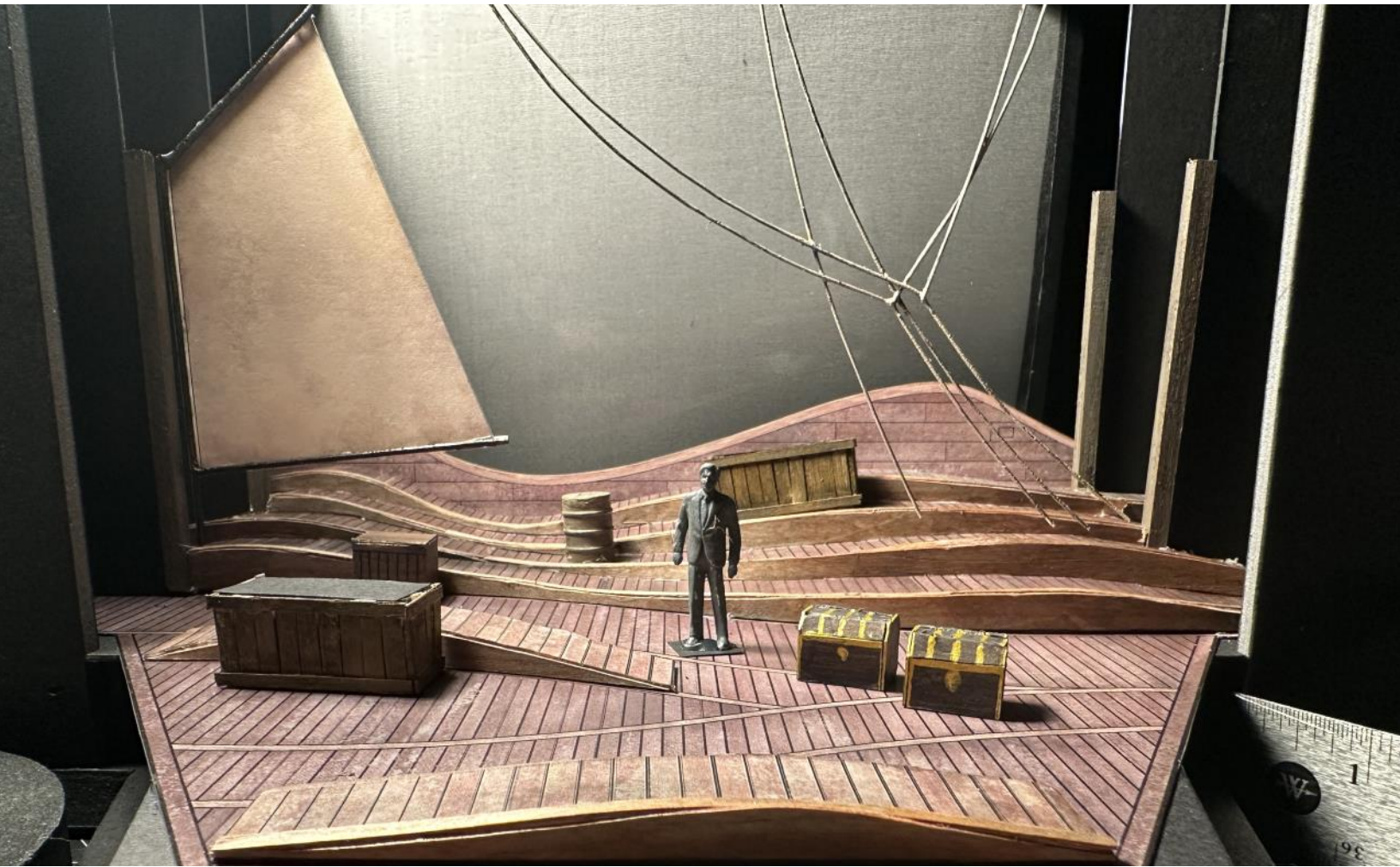
The production’s scenic world was spare and inventive throughout its many iterations. “We knew that no amount of money could actually give you the kind of scenery and flying we wanted to achieve,” Timbers admitted. As Elice explained, “The dozen actors would play everyone and everything—sailors, pirates, orphans, natives, fish, mermaids, birds ... even doors, passageways, masts, storms, jungles.”

Elice strove to write a new play that “connected the dots between the now-mythic characters and plot points of Barrie’s original with Dave and Ridley’s reboot.” Alliteration and puns were a big part of the fun. Witness such lines as: “Best bring back a bucket before Betty Bumbrake blows her bloomin’ breakfast!” Or “Splitting rabbits, really .../Hairs, sir./ Splitting hares, that too.” Pop culture callouts collide with highbrow references, from “Hey, I have talent!/ (Sally Field at the Oscars) They liked me! They really liked me!” to “elusive as the melody in a Philip Glass opera.”

Elice also wanted to “divide the hero into two characters. One would be the boy, Peter, and one would be the girl, the Starcatcher – a smart, spiky kid with the DNA of Scout Finch from *To Kill a Mockingbird* and Jo March from *Little Women*. . . . Even the title of the play expresses this dual-hero approach – which explains how the novel, *Peter and the Starcatchers*, lost a letter to become *Peter and the Starcatcher* on stage.” And there’s our story’s final evolution in a nutshell.



Cover art for the first novel in the series commissioned by Disney—*Peter and the Starcatchers*.



The swells of Toronto's WaveDeck inspired the configuration of the stage deck for *Peter and the Starcatcher*.

## From Page to Stage

“Theater is a team sport,” reflects director Jaclyn Miller, “And *Peter and the Starcatcher* is a truly ensemble piece. I love its heightened theatricality—people playing multiple characters, making quick changes, using what’s in the space around them in inventive ways.”

With a background as a choreographer, Miller approaches directing “with a choreographic brain.” In *39 Steps*, which she directed in spring 2022, four actors brought a myriad of characters to life. In *Peter and the Starcatcher*, 12 actors portray 50 characters, while also representing inanimate objects and producing sound effects. Almost everyone is onstage

all the time. “Every movement is choreographed,” explains Miller. “Who is standing where on stage? Who hands what to who—and when? Sculpting the stage composition is crucial. My goal is to use movement and composition to lay out clear and effective storytelling.”

Designers are crucial team members in this process. As Miller points out, “They help to decide what the space looks like and what’s in the space.” The set for *Peter and the Starcatcher* meets the requirements of the play itself—a first act set at sea and a second act on a tropical island—but will also do double duty as



Toronto's waterfront features a WaveDeck boardwalk that was designed to mimic the waves of Lake Ontario.

the set for Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. The two shows will run back-to-back in Cleveland this spring and in rotating repertory in Lake Tahoe this summer.

Since both shows involve sea imagery, Miller and Sara Bruner (who directs *Twelfth Night*) asked set designer Courtney O'Neill to "create something that evokes water." Coming across the swelling and buckling boardwalks along the Toronto lakefront, O'Neill produced a spare design that calls to mind the sea in the first act and sand dunes in the second. The seascape can accommodate sails, ropes, crates, and barrels—objects associated with ships that the actors can deploy in creative ways. In the second act, giant flowers transform the same stage deck into a tropical island.

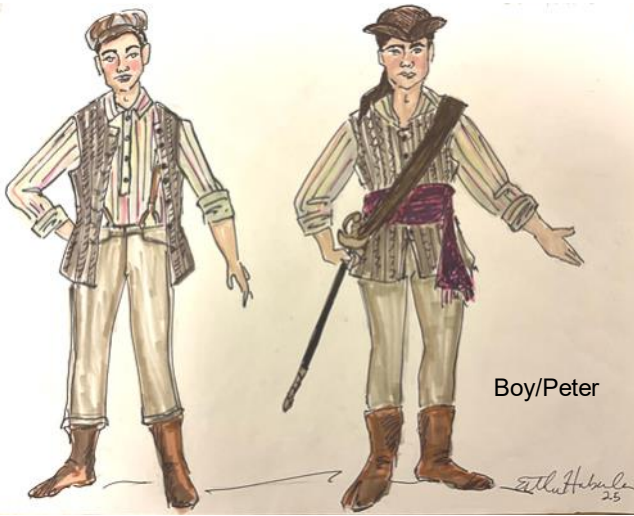
The costuming reinforces the contrasts between the two acts. Everyone will have a "base look" that "leans into the Victorian Period," notes Miller. "Everyone will be able to quickly throw on a jacket or a hat, then ditch it just as quickly." The naturalistic color palette for act one relies on grays, beiges, blacks, with warm fruit color accents. The second act explodes in what Miller calls a "a wild and fun color infusion." "There will be nods as well," she adds, "to the Peter Pan that we know." Against "the elegant, spare, simplicity of the set," costume designer

Esther Haberlen explains, "fabric textures also bring a depth of visual interest. The layering of sashes, belts, and caps and the use of pleated clothing and shimmering, multi-colored brocades all provide a texturally rich environment."

The design team has provided, says Haberlen, "a world of whimsy and fun" for Miller and the acting company to explore in the rehearsal room and onstage.

Large blossoms, inspired by the Bloom series of armchairs designed by Kenneth Cobunpue, will transform the seascape of the production's first act into the island sandscape of the second act.





Boy/Peter

All the men on the ships—whether orphans, sailors, or pirates—wear the same shirts and pants. But vests, tunics, sashes, and different types of caps help to differentiate the character groups.

Molly's clothing layers also accentuate her character arc. She arrives onboard dressed in a "smart" hat and jacket. Once the ship sets sail, she roams about in a soft pinafore. On the island, she's down to a sport corset and pantaloons. But, as costume designer Esther Haberlen underscores, "She doesn't go completely feral. She's still tethered to society. She isn't going to stay in Neverland."



Molly Aster



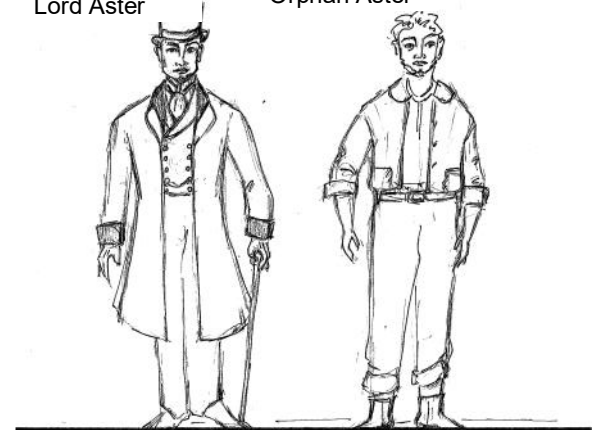
Mrs. Bumbrake

Bumbrake - Pirate

The two women who join the voyage—the Starcatcher Molly and her governess Betty Bumbrake—make their first appearance fully covered in "prim and proper" Victorian-era clothing. By the time everyone is stranded on a tropical island in Act 2, Bumbrake has stripped down to a blouse and bloomers.

Lord Aster

Orphan Aster



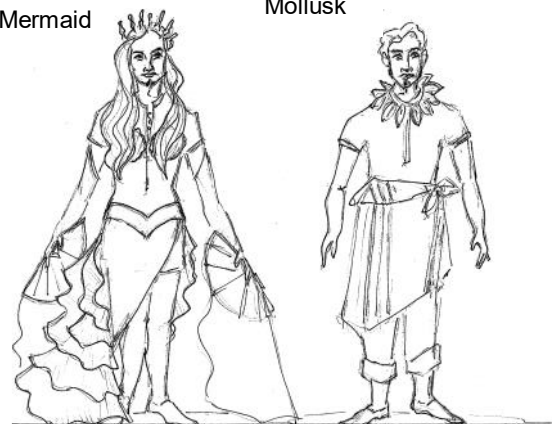
Teacher

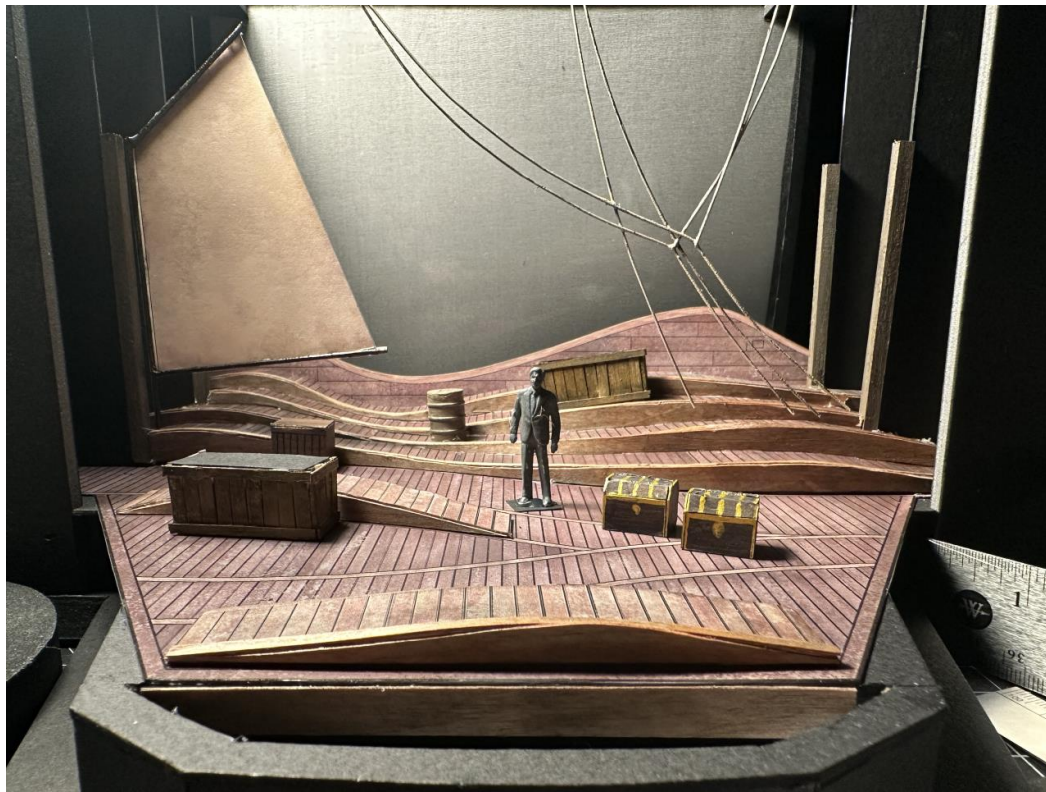
Mollusk



Aster Mermaid

Mollusk





The swells of Toronto's WaveDeck inspired the configuration of the stage deck for *Peter and the Starcatcher*.



Courtney O'Neill's scenic model for Act. I of *Peter and the Starcatcher*.

AGED SAIL  
(NATURAL, NOT OVERLY DISTRESSED)

WOODEN BEAMS  
SLIGHTLY DARKER THAN PLANKING

SATIN FINISH, TYP.

**SAIL**  
SCALE 1/2" = 1'-0"

**WOOD BEAMS**  
SCALE 1/2" = 1'-0"

NOT TO SCALE

STARCHATCHER & 12TH

SAIL AND BEAMS TREATMENT

SCALE: 1/2" = 1'-0"

DATE: 11/20/08

GREAT LAKES IDAHO & TAHOE SHAKESPEARE

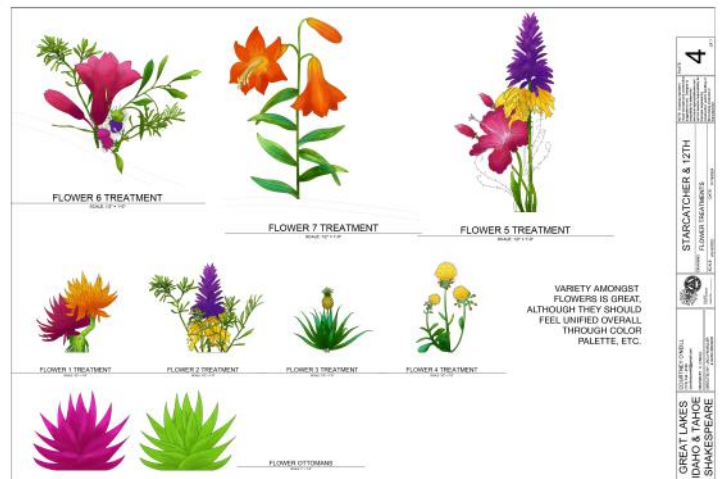
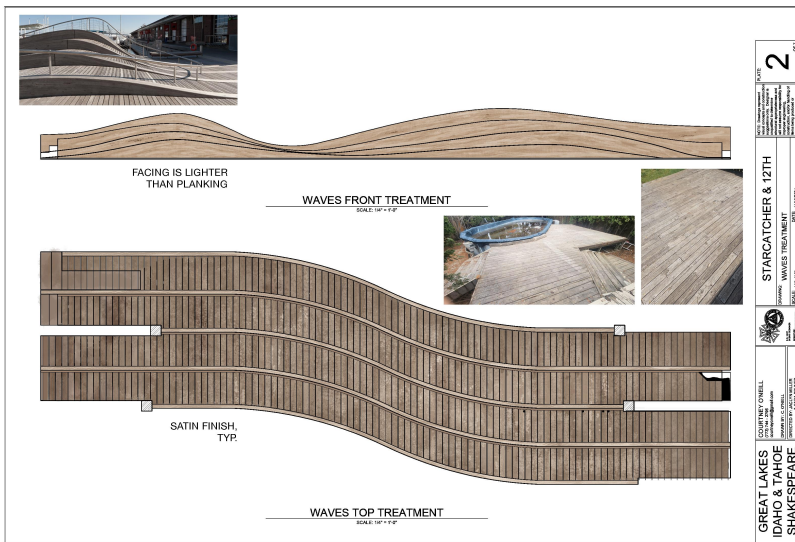
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DATE: 11/20/08



Courtesy O'Neill's scenic model for Act II of *Peter and the Starcatcher*.



Large flowers and other plant shapes will help to transform the seascape of act one into the tropical island of Act II.

## Discussion Questions

### Prior to attending the performance

1. What do you already know about Peter Pan and his origin story? How might this play expand or reimagine the story?
2. What do you think the term "Starcatcher" might mean? How could it connect to the magical world of Neverland?
3. This play is based on a novel by Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson. How do you think a novel like this could be adapted for the stage? If you read this book, what elements might be changed, added, or emphasized in a live performance?
4. *Peter and the Starcatcher* explores themes like friendship, bravery, and identity. Why do you think these themes are important in an origin story? How do these themes relate to growing up? How might these themes be interesting or exciting for younger readers?
5. Why do you think origin stories are so popular in books, movies, and plays? How do they help us understand characters we already know? If you were telling the backstory of a famous character, what key moments or details would you include? Why?
6. The story incorporates a mix of humor, adventure, and poignant moments. How do you think balancing these tones impacts the storytelling? Why might it be important for an origin story to include lighthearted and serious moments?
7. The play is known for its use of imagination and minimalistic staging. How do you think these creative choices affect storytelling in theater? What might you expect to see instead of elaborate sets or costumes?
8. Have you ever felt like an underdog or had to rise to a challenge? How might Peter Pan's backstory connect with those feelings?
9. Think about a time you made a new friend or joined a group. How did it change your perspective or experiences?
10. Peter Pan is often seen as a symbol of eternal childhood. What do you think drives the fascination with the idea of never growing up? How might exploring Peter's origin challenge or reinforce this idea?
11. The idea of "stars" often symbolizes hope, destiny, or wonder. Considering the title, how do you think stars (or "starcatching") might tie into the characters' journeys or themes of the play? Can you recall other works where stars played a symbolic role? What did they symbolize and how might that tie into an origin story for Peter Pan?
12. Discuss how imagination is used as a storytelling tool in the play. How do the minimal sets and props encourage the audience to engage more deeply with the story? Why is imagination an important theme for both the characters and the audience?



## Activities & Writing Prompts

### After Attending the Performance

1. Encourage students to explore characters' inner thoughts and motivations by assigning students a character from the play (e.g., Peter, Molly, Black Stache, Smee) and have them write a diary entry from their character's perspective after a key event in the play. Encourage them to reflect on how the character feels, what they want, and how their relationships with other characters evolve. Share the diary entries in pairs or small groups and discuss how different perspectives shape the story.
2. Ask students to rewrite the ending of *Peter and the Starcatcher* with a twist. For example: What if Molly stayed with Peter on the island? What if Black Stache didn't lose his hand? Students can write their new endings in small groups or individually and share with the class. Discuss how the new endings would alter the meaning or message of the play.
3. Split the class into teams and assign debate topics inspired by the play, such as:
  - “Should Peter have stayed with Molly?”
  - “Is growing up necessary for everyone?”
  - “Are villains like Black Stache born or made?”

Teams prepare arguments and hold a structured debate, with the rest of the class acting as the audience and judges. Reflect on how the debates revealed new insights into the characters and themes.

4. Write a short story about what happens after the play ends. Do Peter and the Lost Boys face new challenges on the island? What happens to Molly when she returns home? Does Black Stache have a new scheme in mind?
5. Imagine Peter writes a letter to Molly after she leaves. What does he say about his new life on the island? How does he feel about her departure? What advice or messages might he share?
6. Write a humorous diary entry from Black Stache's point of view, reflecting on the events of the play. How does he feel about losing his hand? What are his future plans as he transforms into Captain Hook?
7. Write a story about a secret mission Molly undertakes as a Starcatcher after the events of the play. What magical challenges does she face? Does she encounter Peter or the Lost Boys again?
8. Write from the perspective of the magical Starstuff. What does it think about its power and the way humans use it? How does it view Peter, Molly, or Black Stache?
9. Analyze how Peter transforms from an unnamed, powerless boy into a hero. What key events and relationships shape his journey? How does his transformation reflect the play's themes of identity and growth?
10. Explore Molly's role as a leader in the play. How does she defy traditional gender roles? What qualities make her a strong leader, and how does she inspire others?
11. Write an essay exploring whether Black Stache is truly evil or a product of his circumstances. How does humor make him a more complex or relatable character? Do you feel sympathy for him at any point? Why or why not?
12. Write about a time when you or someone you know showed courage in the face of fear. How does this

experience compare to Peter's bravery in the play? What motivates people to act courageously?

13. Reflect on the role of friendship in the play, particularly between Peter, Molly, and the Lost Boys. How does friendship help the characters overcome challenges? How have friendships shaped your own life?
14. Molly challenges traditional expectations placed on girls during her time. Write about a time you or someone you know challenged expectations or stereotypes. Why is it important to question societal norms?
15. Create a backstory for one of the Lost Boys. Where did they come from, and how did they end up with Peter? How does their past shape their personality in the play?
16. Write a chapter of a Starcatcher's guidebook explaining the rules of handling Starstuff. What dangers and responsibilities come with protecting it? Include examples from the play to support your rules.
17. Rewrite a key scene from the play from the perspective of a different character (e.g., Molly's father, Smee, or one of the Lost Boys). How does the new perspective change our understanding of the scene? What insights does this character's viewpoint add?
19. Imagine the characters buried a time capsule on the island. What objects would they include, and why? Write an explanation of the items from the perspective of Peter or Molly.
20. Identify a life lesson or moral from *Peter and the Starcatcher* that resonated with you. How is this lesson conveyed through the characters and events? How does it apply to your own life?

## Discussion Questions

### After Attending the Performance

1. Peter begins the story as an unnamed and abandoned boy. How do you think the loss of identity or a name might shape someone's personality and actions? What might Peter's journey toward finding his name signify on a deeper level? What key moments in the play pushed him toward this transformation? How did his relationship with Molly help shape his growth?
2. Molly, one of the main characters, is portrayed as brave, intelligent, and compassionate. How might her role as a leader challenge traditional gender roles, particularly in a story set in a fantastical past? Why do you think it's significant that Molly is central to the story of Peter's origin? In what ways did she challenge the typical portrayal of female characters in adventure stories? What impact did her leadership have on Peter and the other boys?
3. The villain, Black Stache (a precursor to Captain Hook), is both humorous and menacing. How does blending comedy with villainy shape your expectations for this character? How might such a portrayal challenge or redefine how we view classic villains? How did the actor's performance balance these traits? How does Stache's transformation into Captain Hook parallel Peter's journey?
4. The play's dialogue is written with a quick, witty, and often self-aware style. How does this kind of writing affect how we relate to characters or engage with the story? What do you think the choice to include modern humor in a period setting added to your experience?
5. The play asks audiences to consider how events and relationships shape who we become. Can you think of a moment or person in your life that significantly influenced your own identity? How might this relate to Peter's transformation into a hero?
6. Peter starts as a boy who feels abandoned and powerless but eventually discovers his courage and potential. How do you think moments of adversity can lead to personal growth? What qualities might help a person rise above their circumstances, like Peter?
7. The story includes themes of loyalty, friendship, and sacrifice. How do these ideas connect to real-life relationships and communities? Why do you think stories about strong bonds between characters resonate so strongly with audiences?
8. The ensemble cast often switched roles and used creative staging to portray different characters and elements (e.g., the sea, the ship). How did this approach affect your connection to the characters and the world of the play?
9. Music and movement were used throughout the play to create energy and emotion. How did the choreography or musical moments enhance key scenes or themes? Were there specific songs or movements that stood out to you as particularly effective?
10. The play's humor is fast-paced and often self-referential. How did the comedic timing and modern jokes affect your experience of the story? Did the humor make the serious themes more accessible or undercut their impact?
11. The play asks the audience to actively engage in creating the world along with the performers. How did this collaborative storytelling approach affect your immersion in the story? How does this

compare to other theatrical productions or performances you've seen?

12. Peter's transformation into "The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up" is both triumphant and bittersweet. What do you think the play is saying about the costs and benefits of holding onto childhood? How does Peter's refusal to grow up differ from the way the Lost Boys view childhood?
13. Molly makes a difficult choice to leave Peter at the end of the play. How did you interpret her decision? Do you think her choice reflects maturity, selflessness, or something else entirely?
14. The play's humor and adventurous spirit contrast with its deeper exploration of loss, abandonment, and identity. How did these tonal shifts affect your emotional experience? Did any particular moment resonate with you on a personal level?
15. If you were to retell Peter Pan's origin story in a different medium (e.g., a novel, movie, or different type of play), what elements would you keep or change? Why? How did this production's unique approach to storytelling influence your understanding of the Peter Pan mythos?
16. The characters in the play each have dreams and goals that drive them forward. Which character's motivations did you relate to the most, and why? How did seeing their journey on stage make you reflect on your own aspirations?
17. The play emphasizes teamwork and collaboration as essential to overcoming challenges. How did this theme play out in the relationships between the characters? Can you think of a time in your own life where working with others helped you succeed?
18. The idea of "starstuff" as a magical force that can change people is central to the story. If you could use "starstuff" in your life, what would you use it for, and why? How would you handle the responsibility of protecting it? How do you think the idea of "starstuff" ties into the play's broader themes of transformation and potential?
19. Reflect on how the play explores the concept of growing up. Do you think Peter's choice to stay a boy forever is brave, sad, or selfish? Why? How do you personally feel about the idea of never growing up?
20. Discuss how the theme of sacrifice is portrayed in the play. Which characters make sacrifices, and why? How does sacrifice shape the relationships and events in the story?
21. After seeing the play, how has your perspective on Peter Pan's story changed? Do you view the characters or the themes of Peter Pan differently now that you've seen Peter and the Starcatcher?

## How to Write A Review

### MORE HOW AND LESS WHAT

A theater review is not a book review, you do not need to summarize what happens. Provide the necessary background so the reader knows the name of the play and the basics of what kind of play it is, and then move into your commentary. You do not need to explain WHAT the play is, instead write about HOW successfully it was presented.

### THE ACTOR NOT THE CHARACTER

You can disapprove of the decisions a character makes, but how well did the ACTOR perform the role? Was their behavior appropriate to the part as written? Feel free to share your opinions, comparing or contrasting their work with other actors with whom you are familiar.

### WHAT IS DIRECTION?

Maybe you have heard of a “director” in theater or film, but do you know what they do? It is not a director’s job to tell the actors how to say every line, but they are the person responsible for creating the general mood and concept for the production. What was your impression of the production as a whole? Was it too funny for a serious play? Or not amusing enough for a comic play? Use words to reflect back to the director how successful the production is as a whole.

### DON'T FORGET THE DESIGN

The set you see and the sounds you hear are also unique to this one production of this play. Describe what you see and hear, but also be sure to make clear how successful these designs are in telling the story of the play.

### IN CONCLUSION ...

While it is not necessary to give a “thumbs up” or “thumbs down” your concluding sentence should summarize your impression of the production as a whole.

### THEATER REVIEWS IN THE NEW MEDIA

Reviews in news websites may be 1000 words, they may be as brief as 300 words. Can you write a one-page review? Can you write a 100 word review, to post on Facebook? Do you think you could create a 140-character review that sums up the production for posting on Twitter?

A sample review written by a student follows this page.

## A Sample Review Written by a Student

### **"Gambit": More Poetry Than History** — Mark Wood

If Aristotle was correct when he said that poetry "is a higher thing than history," then "Royal Gambit," which opened Friday night at Pentacle Theater, is, I suppose, on the right track.

For those who were expecting a representational treatment of the life of England's Henry VIII, "Royal Gambit" was a shock, if not a disappointment. Those who sought poetry got it, although of a very dogmatic and simplistic sort.

This unusual, highly presentational play by Hermann Gressieker, directed by Ed Classen, is an indictment of modern man as a ruthless opportunist. The Tudor king is a representative of a rationalizing, shifty society which has become "superior to the highest" while "wallowing in the depths."

As Henry uses the banners of "reason" and "humanism" to obtain then dispose of his six wives, so modern man uses them for his own pleasure and glorification, uses them to wage war in the name of peace, to hate in the name of love.

Such is the grim theme pleasingly presented by a company of seven actors, who performed their roles energetically, if unevenly. The presentational acting style employed here is difficult to perfect. It should be theatrical, yet believable; aimed at the head, yet acceptable to the heart.

Louise Larsen was a standout as Catherine of Aragon, Largely because she utilized this presentational approach and was not afraid of open theatricality. Her flamboyant stage presence, which needed to be toned down in her recent role in "Last of the Red Hot Lovers," found full vent here.

Henry's fourth wife, Anne of Cleves, was portrayed by Gale Rieder, who quickly became an audience favorite. Her thick accent was letter-perfect and her direct humor was a welcome contrast to the bitter satire of the rest of the play.

The other four actresses—Kathy Stratton, Marcia Engblom, Polly Bond and Patricia Sloan—each had their exceptional moments. However, they generally seemed tied to more conventional, representational acting styles.

Ron Fox was superb in the role of Henry. Tuxedoed, leering with the look of a demonic marionette, the vacant stare of a deranged orator, Fox dominated the stage fully, commanding both in voice and stage presence.

The technical elements of the play were more than adequate. Musical accompaniment was appropriately sparse and simple.

At one point the play, King Henry roared, "In my realm I decide what constitutes tragedy!" Ironically, Gressieker strips modern man not only of his possibilities as a tragic figure worthy of any sympathies at all. In the final moments of the play, Catherine of Aragon announces the death of modern man and the birth of a new era. It is a scene of great hope, but it is not as profound as her earlier pronouncement to her husband that "the ways of the world are not so cut and dried!"

For my own part, I wish that "Royal Gambit's" statement were not so cut and dried. By making man out to be such a simple monster the play defeats its own purposes and turns poetry into scathing dogma, which is probably even less interesting than, say, history.

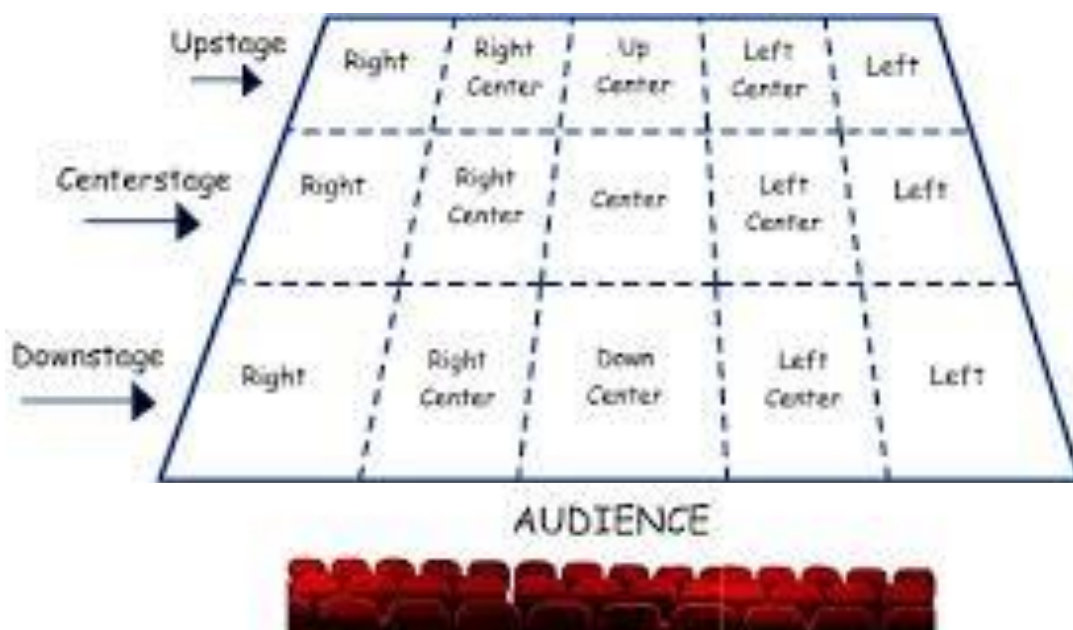
<http://faculty.chemeketa.edu/jrupert3/eng105/Annrev.html>

# A Brief Glossary of Theater Terms

<b>Apron</b>	The part of the stage in front of the curtain
<b>Auditorium or House</b>	Where the audience sits
<b>Beam Spread</b>	The area a single light covers
<b>Blackout</b>	Turning off all the lights in the theatre at once
<b>Board</b>	The control center for lights, sound, or both
<b>Book (The)</b>	A copy of the script containing all notes and blocking
<b>Box Office</b>	Where the audience buys tickets
<b>Box Set</b>	A set in a proscenium with three walls
<b>Call</b>	The time certain members of the production need to be at the theatre
<b>Cheat</b>	When an actor takes a realistic action and modifies it for the audience to see
<b>Cloth</b>	Scenery painted on fabric
<b>Cue</b>	A line or action that immediately leads to another action by the actor (for them to speak) designer or stage manager (to change the lights or sound)
<b>Curtain Call</b>	The bows at the end of the show
<b>Dimmer</b>	Equipment that controls the brightness of a light
<b>Director</b>	The creative head of a production. They create a vision for the show and work with actors, designers, and crew to bring that vision to life
<b>Flat</b>	A frame covered with canvas, cardboard, or some other light material which is then painted as part of the set
<b>Floodlight</b>	A light that has a wide unfocused beam covering most of the stage
<b>Fly</b>	A system used to raise set backgrounds, set pieces, or potentially actors
<b>Follow-spot</b>	A spotlight that can follow an actor as they move across around the stage
<b>Footlights</b>	Floodlights on the floor at the front of the stage.
<b>Gel</b>	A piece of plastic placed over the light to change its color
<b>Greenroom</b>	A room where the company can relax, eat, or potentially watch the show if a TV and a camera has been rigged
<b>Notes</b>	The director's notes on the performance or rehearsal
<b>Pit</b>	An area between the stage and the audience where an orchestra can sit (typically below audience level)
<b>Producer</b>	The person responsible for all logistical and financial aspects of a production (as opposed to the creative head, the director).
<b>Properties or Props</b>	Items used by actors in a show (such as swords, plates, watches, etc.)

<b>Proscenium</b>	A type of stage defined by a proscenium arch. Proscenium theatres typically distinctly separate the audience and stage by a window (defined by the proscenium arch). The stage typically will not go far past the proscenium arch (the Ohio Theatre, for example).
<b>Raked Stage</b>	A stage that is angled (upstage is the top of the hill and downstage the bottom) so that the audience can see the action more clearly
<b>Set</b>	The scenery used in a scene or throughout the play
<b>Set Dressing</b>	Parts of the set that don't serve a practical function but make the set look realistic.
<b>Spotlight</b>	A type of light that is focused so that it can light a very specific area
<b>Strike</b>	Taking apart and removing a set from the theatre
<b>Thrust</b>	A stage that goes beyond the proscenium arch so that the audience is sitting on three sides of the set - in front, and on either side (the Hanna Theatre, for example).
<b>Tracks</b>	The rails on which curtains (tabs) run.
<b>Trap</b>	A hole in the stage covered by a door where actors or set pieces can exit or enter
<b>Understudy</b>	An actor who learns all of the lines and blocking of another actor (typically one of the actors in a lead role) who can perform in case the main actor cannot go on
<b>Upstage</b>	The rear of the stage
<b>Wings</b>	The sides of the stage typically blocked off by curtains where actors and crew can stand and wait for their cues

## STAGE DIRECTIONS





# Learning Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.A

Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.4

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.7

Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.5

Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.5.A

Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.1.A

Apply the understanding that usage is a matter of convention, can change over time, and is sometimes contested.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.5

Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.5.A

Interpret figures of speech (e.g., hyperbole, paradox) in context and analyze their role in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.5.B

Analyze nuances in the meaning of words

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.2

Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.5

Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.6

Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).



# Student Matinee Series 2024-2025 Season

**Into the Woods** by Stephen Sondheim & James Lapine

**A Midsummer Night's Dream** by William Shakespeare in a modern translation by Jeff Whitty

**A Christmas Carol** by Charles Dickens

**Peter and the Starcatcher** by Rick Elice

**Twelfth Night** by William Shakespeare

**Noises Off** by Michael Frayn

**Make Classic Theater Come Alive for Your Students!**

Since 1962, students have enjoyed the thrill of experiencing classic plays, professionally produced by Great Lakes Theater. Our student audiences experience the same top-quality productions offered in our public performances, but at a fraction of the cost. The state-of-the-art classical thrust stage configuration in the gorgeously renovated Hanna Theater affords students a dynamic audience experience unequaled in our region.

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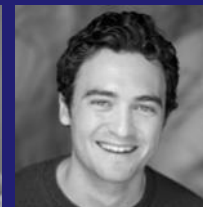
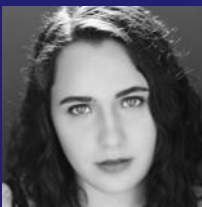


School

# Residency Program

Bring the Classics to Your Classroom!

Launched in 1981, Great Lakes Theater's in-school residency program is now one of the most successful artist-in-residence programs in the country. Each year over 16,000 students in over 100 schools experience the pleasure, power and relevance of classic literature brought to life in their own classrooms.



From *The Sneetches* to *Romeo and Juliet* (and so many more in between!) each week-long residency uses an interactive, hands-on approach, and is designed to meet the common core education standards. We visit your school with scripts, props, costumes—and for high schools, swords, daggers and stage blood—to explore classic literature in an unforgettable way!

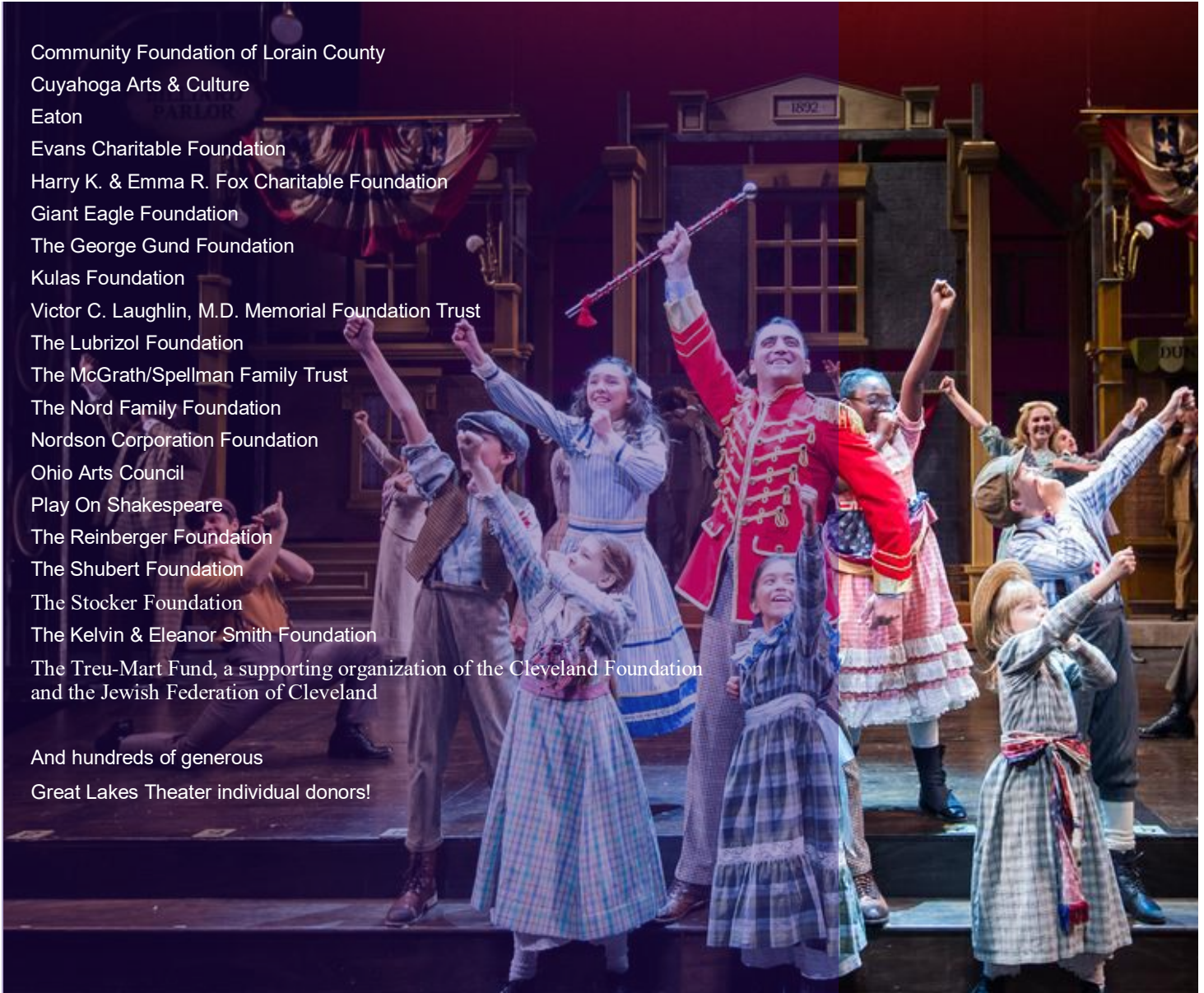
For more information contact Lisa Ortenzi at 216.453.4446

[Greatlakes theater.org/education](http://Greatlakes theater.org/education)

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*Peter and the Starcatcher* is part of the Kulas Musical Theatre Series at Great Lakes Theater





**Sara Bruner, Producing Artistic Director**

The mission of Great Lakes Theater, through its main stage productions and its education programs, is to bring the pleasure, power and relevance of classic theater to the widest possible audience.

Since the company's inception in 1962, programming has been rooted in Shakespeare, but the company's commitment to great plays spans the breadth of all cultures, forms of theater and time periods including the 20th century, and provides for the occasional mounting of new works that complement the classical repertoire.

Classic theater holds the capacity to illuminate truth and enduring values, celebrate and challenge human nature and actions, revel in eloquent language, preserve the traditions of diverse cultures and generate communal spirit. On its mainstage and through its education program, the company seeks to create visceral, immediate experiences for participants, asserting theater's historic role as a vehicle for advancing the common good, and helping people make the most joyful and meaningful connections between classic plays and their own lives. This Cleveland theater company wishes to share such vibrant experiences with people across all age groups, creeds, racial and ethnic groups and socio-economic backgrounds.

The company's commitment to classic theater is magnified in the educational programs (for both adults and students) that surround its productions. Great Lakes Theater has a strong presence in area schools, bringing students to the theater for matinee performances and sending specially trained actor-teachers to the schools for weeklong residencies developed to explore classic drama from a theatrical point of view. GLT is equally dedicated to enhancing the theater experience for adult audiences. To this end, GLT regularly serves as the catalyst for community events and programs in the arts and humanities that illuminate the plays on its stage.

Great Lakes Theater is one of only a handful of American theaters that have stayed the course as a classic theater. As GLT celebrates over a decade in its permanent home at the Hanna Theatre, the company reaffirms its belief in the power of partnership, its determination to make this community a better place in which to live, and its commitment to ensure the legacy of classic theater in Cleveland.

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